

The power of design on flexible learning & digital network literacy

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Aims

1. To measure the pedagogical approach for a new course (Designing for Flexible Learning Practice) against three eLearning Guidelines:
 - TD11 Should staff use a team approach to develop and teach the course?
 - TD12 Is the design of learning informed by research on effective eLearning?
 - TO9 Are staff encouraged to participate in networks and learning communities involved in reviewing, developing or sharing good practice in the use of e-learning?
2. To investigate how strategies, which are used to promote network learning and engagement in learning communities, influence participants' digital network literacy and level of self-efficacy for eLearning.

Outcomes

1. Three Case Studies of Design were developed
 - Practical skills for veterinary nurses (CDROM)
 - a resource
 - Designing for Flexible Learning Practice
 - a course
 - Facilitating Online Learning Communities
 - a course
2. Research evaluation of a course - Designing for Flexible Learning Practice. An effectiveness evaluation was chosen because it can be used to determine if a method of instruction helped enhance knowledge and skills and alter beliefs. A mixed methods approach (focus group interviews, online survey, assessments) was used to gather data from both course developers/lecturers (also researchers) and course participants who had completed the course. Preliminary findings from the effectiveness evaluation of the course indicate the following:
 - course design is evidence-based,
 - team teaching is appropriate
 - approaches to teaching have changed
 - a wider range of technologies are used in teaching
 - levels of digital network literacy are improved
 - confidence (self-efficacy) with technologies has increased

3. Alumni are taking part in online professional networks There is collaboration in course development and also information exchange. This helps practitioners to keep current.

Benefits for learners

Already the design of the course has been modified to accommodate feedback from participants in the research evaluation. For example, the following changes to the design of the course have been made:

- more emphasis on flexible learning theory;
- learning self-paced and based on an online course schedule with weekly activities;
- two people developing and teaching the course;
- support for using social networking tools has devolved to support services;
- more use of professional networks to provide expert content.

Benefits for NZ practitioners

A model of online course design has been developed which incorporates the following:

- open educational resources;
- strategies to promote digital network literacy in learning and teaching;
- methods to enhance self-efficacy for online learning;
- professional networks and connectivity;
- evidence-based practice;
- team teaching;
- eLearning Guidelines.

Next steps

- Results from the research evaluation will inform future design of the DFLP course.
- The project findings will be presented at a conference in the future and prepared for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

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